

# Ann Arbor



# Observer

ANN ARBOR, MICHIGAN

JULY, 1977



## JULY 20-23, 1977



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# The Remarkable Sylvester Murray

*He's a black southerner who in 1973 became  
Ann Arbor's city administrator at age 32.  
Despite his youth and the difficult job he filled,  
Sy Murray has become one of the most widely  
respected people in town.*

THERE may not be a more demanding job in Ann Arbor than that of city administrator. To handle it well takes a highly knowledgeable, hard-nosed manager who can also deal sensitively and fairly with the demands of politicians and citizens alike. It's hard to find anyone in Ann Arbor who knows Sy Murray who isn't impressed by the way he handles the job.

Take, for example, Jamie Kenworthy, veteran Democratic councilmember from the fourth ward: "Murray's extremely bright. And he has high standards as city administrator in terms of public information. He keeps things open. Doesn't do a lot of maneuvering. He also has a natural command of situations. He does not have the agonizing intellectual mind; he has more the incisive, military mind. An organizational mind. And a good command of detail."

Pat Kenney, Murray's chief assistant who is over the administrative departments of the city, says this: "The thing I notice particularly about working for him is that he will make the decisions that have to be made, and he'll make them soon enough that people can operate from those decisions. There are many requests for decisions that come to him—and these involve wide-ranging issues. He has to have background in all of them so he can deal with them. It could be anything from a police matter to a financial matter. He's got to be able to deal with them all."

Republican mayor pro tem and Fifth Ward council member Lou Belcher, by profession a managerial consultant, is a particularly avid



Murray fan: "From my perception, Sy has the respect of his employees and both sides on council. To do that after three and a half years is quite a feat in itself. I think it speaks well of how he gets things done. He has the uncanny ability, as do all good managers, to get things done through other people. And the ability to get very quickly to the heart of a problem. He's good at defining a problem, which is what must be done in order to solve it.

"He's good at giving city council the various options they have," Belcher continued. "He'll lay things out for us to the point where we can usually choose from the three or four best options available. This of course saves us a lot of time. He's good at taking directions from council. He seems to always know what the majority of council wants to do, yet he won't step all over a minority viewpoint. To this day, I have no idea whether Sy Murray leans Republican or leans

Democrat. He's just a remarkable administrator. They come along very seldom."

Another Republican, Jim Stephenson, was mayor back in 1973, when Sy Murray was chosen city administrator. He told us how Murray was selected. "When I took over as mayor in April of 1973, Guy Larcom had retired. The city clerk's office, through municipal channels of some kind, sent out an advertisement for city manager. Within a short time there were about eighty-five applications for the job—very detailed applications—from people all over the United States. Some really top flight people. The post of city administrator of Ann Arbor seems to be so highly regarded a position that we had some of the best to choose from.

"We went through all those applications and boiled them down to about a couple dozen. Then those two dozen we reviewed again and got it down to about a dozen. We interviewed many of those, then we narrowed it down to three, of which Murray was one.

"We really only had a brief meeting with Sy before that. But you know, Sy is one of the most straightforward individuals you'll ever meet, with the least amount of put-on of anybody you'll meet. And that's exactly how Sy came across at our first meeting. A man with a good deal of self-confidence, very straightforward. He just made an across-the-board favorable impression on everybody on council. And we had a pretty diverse council at the time: seven Republicans, two Democrats, and two HRP members. (continued on following page)



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"The choice really boiled down to between Sy and a man who was working in Florida in some governmental post. This other man was a very sharp, capable guy, who had had substantial experience in communities like Ann Arbor. Sy never had. On paper the guy from Florida had better qualifications. So, it was just Sy's direct approach to everything and the feeling that he had a better ability to appeal to the wide cross section of people that make up this community that got him the job. We did not want to get into a situation where the city administrator's position was politicized. We didn't want to hire a Republican city administrator who, in the event the majority on council would change, would be replaced by a Democratic city administrator. We wanted a situation where a mayor and council set policy, but where we had a pro in the job of city administrator who could carry out a variety of policies regardless of who has the majority at the time.

"Don't give us a lot of credit for being so damn perceptive for hiring Sy," Stephenson told us. "There was some luck involved too. You don't have that much opportunity to get to know somebody before you hire him. Yet, if we had interviewed everybody in the United States for the job, we couldn't have done better than Sy Murray. So luck was involved, combined with our willingness to not do the conventional, which would have been to hire the city administrator from a place like Champaign, Illinois, or Princeton, New Jersey."

As city administrator, Sy Murray is the person who runs Ann Arbor's city government. The mayor and council collectively set policy. But it is the city administrator who manages the city's personnel and directs the operation of city services.

A man in Sy Murray's position gets to know a lot of people around the city. But as we talked to various of his associates, no one seemed to know all that much about his background. We'd heard a story that he had once been a sergeant in the Army, which, we were told, accounted for his ability to take charge of matters. And we knew he had been city manager of Inkster, Michigan, before coming to Ann Arbor. But that was about it. So it was with an especially keen curiosity that

"It was just Sy's direct approach to everything and the feeling that he had a better ability to appeal to the wide cross section of people who make up this community that got him the job."

—Former Mayor James Stephenson

we met with Sy Murray to find out more about his past, as well as how he accounts for his success in the difficult job as Ann Arbor's city administrator.

**S**YLVESTER Murray was born in August of 1941, in Miami, Florida. He was the sixth and last child of Tommy Lee Murray, a carpenter, and Annabelle Murray, a maid. Murray grew up in an all black neighborhood of Miami. "It was a single family area," he told us, "but it was not middle class, nor completely a slum. It was something in between. We were a close-knit family with a very strict father, but because it was a situation where both father and mother worked, the older brothers and sisters looked after us younger kids."

Both of his parents had grown up in Georgia and had then migrated to the more affluent Miami area. "My mother was very religious. We grew up in a Holiness church, and as children we had to go to church. Even though my father never went to church except for weddings and funerals, he insisted that we go with my mother."

"My father wasn't wealthy, but he knew how to save money. He instilled in each of us the position that we should be responsible for money. He didn't give us money when we were growing up. He would pay for the clothing, food, shelter—that's all. No allowances. If we wanted to go to the movies or whatever, we had to go out and sell bottles or clean somebody's back yard. We had to go to work, not

because he made us work, but because if we didn't, we didn't have any money to spend, period. So each of us worked solely to put money in our pockets."

Murray's first major ambition as a teenager met with jarring failure. "In high school, I wanted very much to be into sports. I went out for basketball in tenth grade," he remembers, "and during tryouts, the coach called me over and said in front of everybody else, 'Murray, I think you have to practice some more with your feet action before playing, so I suggest you take off a year and play some hopscotch.' I'll never forget that," Murray laughed, "it was so demoralizing. So I decided to take up band, and played trombone the last three years of high school."

"I was a good student academically, but you had to be in my family. Our parents knew when our report cards were due before we did. If we got a 'C,' it was as if we had gotten an 'F.' You just didn't want to go through all that trauma, so you kept your grades up." In a class of 386, Murray graduated tenth.

There was no question what he

#### NOTICE

Summertime is vacation time, and the *Ann Arbor Observer* is going on vacation, too. Our next issue will be out September 1.

### Ann Arbor Observer

Don Hunt and  
Mary Hunt, Editors

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would do once he graduated from high school. "My father was a third-grade dropout, and all he knew was that you were supposed to go to college. His position was that you had to go to school—there could be no dropping out."

"My oldest brother dropped out of high school and tried to make it as a blues singer (he didn't make it), and the day he dropped out, my father was through with him. He hasn't helped him financially since. When my oldest sister decided to get married after high school, my father dropped her. He didn't even pay for her wedding. His position was that you should go to college and make something of yourself."

The four youngest Murrays apparently got the message. All graduated from college. Two are now teachers; one, a biologist.

"My father had two dreams," Murray told us, "one was to put all his children through college. The other was to buy himself a Cadillac and go to visit New York City. In the 40's and 50's, that was like being in heaven. He finally realized that second dream on my graduation. I was the last of his kids to graduate, so he bought a new Cadillac, attended my graduation in Pennsylvania, and then went to New York for three or four days before going back home."

In 1959, Murray began attending Lincoln University in Pennsylvania, the same college Mayor Albert Wheeler attended almost three decades earlier. "It was all male, less than a thousand students. It was the first black private

"My father was a third-grade dropout, and all he knew was that you were supposed to go to college. He had two dreams. One was to put all his children through college. The other was to buy himself a Cadillac and go to visit New York City."

school to train blacks in the classics.

"I went there because I wanted to get away from Miami. I was looking for the farthest away school that would give me a scholarship. My first choice was actually Howard, a large co-ed black school in Washington, D.C. But my brother had gone to Howard, and while he had been an 'A' student in high school, when he got to Howard, he did poorly. My mother felt that he did poorly because he was at the 'big city school with all the girls.' So she insisted that I not go there, even though I had gotten a bigger scholarship to go to Howard. I wanted to go there, I've got to admit, for the very same reasons she wouldn't let me."

"The first semester at Lincoln was rough. I had come from an all-black southern school, so that when I got to the north, I found that our schooling had not been as good as I had thought. I was competing with blacks from much better northern schools. That first semester, I actually got a 'D.' I'll never forget it. I was almost a grown man, but I cried." But Murray made a dramatic recovery. By the end of the four years, he graduated cum laude. He was also president of the student body, president of his fraternity, and editor-in-chief of the student news-

paper. "College was one of my better experiences," he said.

As editor of the student newspaper, Murray found himself in the position of being a young rebel. "I became editor my junior year, when there were only six people on the paper. I came in and did all the things you weren't supposed to do. I practiced a sort of yellow journalism. I changed the format of the paper, got new columnists who would write articles criticizing the administration, and got the paper circulated to all the school's trustees and big-time alumni. It got to the point where the president of the college tried to stop us from publishing the paper. He said we were printing untruths. They weren't really untruths," Murray smiled, "we just sensationalized things a bit." By Murray's senior year, there were ten times the number of students enrolling in journalism to be on the paper he had vitalized.

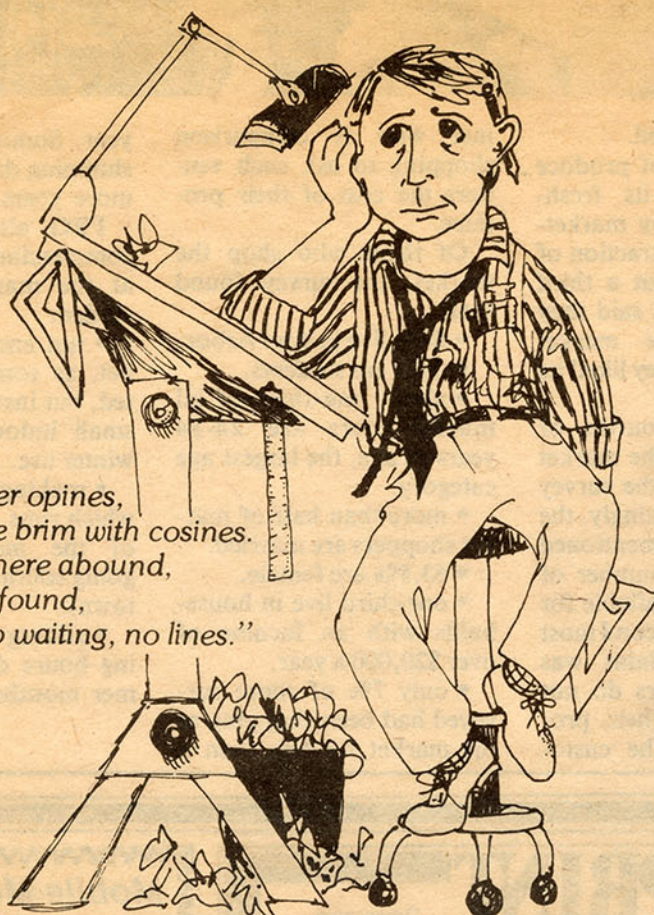
One of Murray's proudest feats while at college involved getting Malcolm X to speak on campus. Working through the secretary of the dean of students, he managed secretly to invite the radical black leader to a student assembly, something the conservative administration would have never approved. "It turned out real, real nice," Murray recalls. "Malcolm X was a very impressive figure. He came to the campus with a big entourage. We met him at the gates of the college and ushered him in." There was a full house that night at the often poorly attended student assemblies. "He spoke

very eloquently, telling us that we were somebody. That we have a heritage, too. He told us not to stand on the back burner."

Murray remembers the conclusion of Malcolm X's speech with particular relish. "There was a large percentage of native African students at Lincoln back then, and they were supposed to have a meeting right after the assembly. So after Malcolm X spoke, I announced the meeting and said, 'All Africans are asked to attend.' When Malcolm X heard that, he stepped up and told both me and the audience, 'Brother Murray, we are all from Africa,' and everybody just bellowed. While they were laughing, it gave me a chance to think, and when they calmed down, I said, 'Those of us from Africa who arrived recently and voluntarily are asked to attend.' And everybody just bellowed all over again. Malcolm X laughed too, and said, 'Pretty good, Murray, pretty good.'"

**G**AINING and holding office as president of the student body at Lincoln gave Murray a taste of politics, a taste he liked. So he decided to become a politician and aimed at attending law school to prepare for a political career. But one of the trustees of the college, whom he got to know through his student newspaper work, caused an important shift in his plans. This trustee happened to be the director of the Fels Institute, a part of the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania. "Once during a convocation I was sitting next to him and he asked me my plans. I told him I wanted to be a politician. 'You mean, for example, you'd like some day to become the mayor of a city?' the director asked. I said yes. He said, 'Have you ever heard of a city manager?' I had to

(continued on page 15)



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# Ann Arbor Items Ann Arbor Items A

## Downtown Fix-Up Fever Is Catching

Leroy Ehnis watched with interest the transformation of the buildings next door to his work clothes store at 116 W. Liberty. The paint covering the Old Town bar, Mr. Flood's Party, and the new Leopold Bloom's restaurant was being washed away with chemical cleaners to reveal the natural red-orange brick beneath. Carpenter Tim Carr constructed a new 19th century style front for Leopold Bloom's to replace the modern metal facade of Leo Ping's, the restaurant it supplants.

Ehnis is not the sort of businessman to follow trends impulsively. In fact, he had completely ignored earlier Chamber of Commerce modernization campaigns in the 1950's and 1960's. As a result his store is an authentic period piece much as it was sixty years ago. There are gold leaf letters on the door, pressed metal ceilings, overhead fans, and open shelving.

Last month, however, Ehnis caught the fix-up fever. He was impressed with the woodwork on the new facade next door. Apparently he liked the natural brick, too, or at least felt that if half of the row of 1865 look-alike buildings were cleaned of paint, the other half should also be. At any rate, he persuaded his neighbors to the east, Evelyn Stack of The Round Table and Jerry and Elsie Heath of the Liberty Inn, to join him and have the paint removed from their building fronts.

Ehnis is also having a new cornice put above his ground-story store window, so the cornice line will continue along the row of buildings except for the Liberty Inn. Its owners have also expressed interest in remodeling the modern tile facade to relate better to the building's Victorian upper stories.

The downtown restoration idea first caught on among new businesses run mainly by younger people. Now many long-established firms are getting into the act.

## Ann Arbor's Five Cheapest Drugstores

It's common knowledge that drug prices vary widely and that it pays to comparison shop. But a recent survey of 27 Ann Arbor pharmacies, based on prices of eleven commonly-prescribed drugs, revealed that prices at the most expensive stores were 50% above the cheapest, and that it's not unusual to pay two or even three times as much for the same drug in one store as in another.

The Salvation Army has compiled a very helpful "Senior Citizens Guide to Prescription Drugs in the Ann Arbor Area," which gives prices for the eleven selected drugs based on February/March 1977 costs. The pamphlet lists special ser-



vices (free delivery, personal charge accounts, senior citizens' discounts) at each Ann Arbor drug store.

Of the five cheapest drug stores, the total cost of standard quantities of the eleven

drugs was \$63.82 at Meijer's, \$65.02 at Maple Village K-Mart, \$70.47 at Super X on Broadway, \$70.75 at the Michigan Pharmacy (Main and Madison), and approximately \$71 at the three Cunningham stores.

The University Hospital pharmacy was most expensive (\$98.75), followed by the three Richardson's stores. In general the more expensive stores were more likely to offer free delivery and personal charge accounts.

The complete Senior Citizens' Guide to Prescription Drugs is available directly from the Salvation Army, 220 East Washington, 48104, at no charge, or by mail for 25 cents.



## Who Goes to the Farmers' Market?

A recently concluded study of Ann Arbor's Farmers' Market provides an interesting profile of those who use the market and why. The study was commissioned by the city-owned market's governing board. They paid Ann Arbor's Feasibility Research Group (FRG) \$12,250 to provide background data and recommendations for future changes in the market's operations.

FRG surveyed over one thousand people in the community, contacting both people who had come to shop at the market and people in their homes. Here are some of the things they found:

- The Farmers' Market is a popular Ann Arbor institution. From spring

through fall, 46% of all Ann Arbor households go to the market at least once or more a month. Some 22% go once a week or more.

- The overwhelming reason people go to the market is to buy produce—vegetables, fruits, as well as eggs, cider, and other edibles. Second in shopper popularity are plants and flowers, followed by crafts. During the summer and fall only 1.7% of respondents in the survey said they came primarily to buy crafts, so the growing demands of craftspeople to be allotted more space in the market (they presently get only seven of 121 stalls) will probably find little success. FRG recommends that the present mix of farm and crafts

vendors be retained.

- The quality of produce sold, especially its freshness, was rated by market-goers the chief attraction of the market. About a third of those surveyed said they shopped at the market simply because they liked its atmosphere.

- Over three-fourths of those who go to the market go there by car, the survey found. Not surprisingly, the chief complaint mentioned was the limited number of parking spaces available for customers. The second most mentioned complaint was that many vendors do not post prices for their produce, requiring the custo-

mer who is comparison shopping to ask such vendors the cost of their produce.

Of those who shop the market, the survey found that:

- 84% live in Ann Arbor.
- 28% are students.
- about one-third of all market-goers are 24-34 years of age, the largest age category.
- more than half of market shoppers are married.
- 63.5% are female.
- one-third live in households with an income of over \$20,000 a year.
- only 7% of those surveyed had been shopping at the market for less than a

year. Some 30% had been shopping there for eleven or more years.

FRG also provided recommendations for changes at the market. These included:

- not enclosing the market, as some have suggested, but instead providing a small indoor addition for winter use.
- making Detroit Street, which runs directly in front of the market, one-way going south (towards downtown).
- adding Monday evening hours during the summer months.

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# ANN ARBOR ITEMS ANN ARBOR ITEMS ANN ARBOR ITEM



## Joe Tiboni's Front Yard: Art or Junk?

Ann Arbor's counterculture population, which blossomed in the late sixties, has wilted in recent years. One person who has maintained his counterculture credentials is Joe Tiboni, and as a result, he finds himself facing the city of Ann Arbor in court.

Tiboni has for years been a sound man for rock and blues groups (he now handles the sound system at Mr. Flood's Party). Thir-

teen years ago, to escape the rising rents in Ann Arbor he bought a small house on Spring Street. But acquiring a house did not, for Tiboni, mean acquiring the tastes of most Ann Arbor property owners. He has made a point of eschewing the custom of a grassy front lawn, for one thing. Instead, he grows vegetables in his front yard. This year he has planted brussels sprouts, broccoli, cauliflower, collard

greens, beets, carrots, peppers, tomatoes, lettuce, beans, squash, and melons.

Tiboni has also ornamented the front of his house with an old Coca-Cola machine and an old-fashioned wringer-style Maytag washer, which now sees service as a planter for geraniums. He regards these objects as Americana, no different in principle from the wrought-iron figure of a stable boy with outstretched

hand or antique milk-cans that people put on their porches.

But at least one of Tiboni's neighbors views his unusual ornaments as junk and filed a complaint with the city. City building inspector Ray Peterson came out and looked over the Tiboni yard and decided that these objects are indeed junk, and therefore violate the city's ordinance against discarding appliances in

front yards.

Peterson told Tiboni to clear them out. Tiboni has refused, so the city is taking him to court. Tiboni will argue that the Coke and washing machine are genuine pieces of Americana which he has every right to keep in his front yard. We'll let you know the outcome in September's *Observer*.

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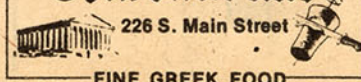
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# ANN ARBOR ITEMS ANN ARBOR ITEMS ANN ARBOR ITEN

## Major Developments around North Main

Things are changing fast in the area around North Main and Ann Street, but nobody's quite sure how.

Disposal of the old Post Office at North Main and Catherine is still up in the air. The city and county have put up \$25,000 apiece to acquire it as part of a joint city-county courts building to relieve overcrowding in City Hall and the County Building. But the U.S. Government, which owns the building, hasn't responded to the offer. As local governmental units, the city and county have precedence over private parties in negotiating to acquire surplus government property. But the property has been appraised for \$250,000; the government may not accept the city-county's \$50,000 offer. If they can't negotiate an acceptable price, private investors would have a chance to bid on it. Several have already expressed an interest in acquiring the building.

The post office property is the key to the joint city-county project. If the city and county decide the U.S. Government's price is too high, the county will probably look to the jail block (Main-Ann-Ashley-Huron) for expansion, assuming that the County Commissioners agree to consolidate county offices in downtown Ann Arbor as the county planning department recommends.

The ambience of Ann Street behind the County Building changed suddenly in mid-June when the leases of the Derby Bar and other tenants of the century-old Victorian block were up. Overnight the long-established bars and billiard parlors were gone, and along with them went the congregations of people (nearly all black) who typically spilled outside onto the sidewalk. "The block," as it was called, was a mixture of the old-time corner bar and the old-fashioned den of iniquity. Drugs, illegal gambling, and violence weren't uncommon, but ordinary law-abiding people frequented the Derby too. Presently much of the Ann Street scene has moved to Island and Riverside Parks. Where it will ultimately end up is a matter of interest and concern to city police. Many Ann Street habitués were from out of town; perhaps, some say, Harriet Street in Ypsilanti will inherit part of the business.

Stanley Carras, who had owned the Derby for 21 years,



is selling the business and its liquor license. With the long waiting list of applicants for licenses (which are parcelled out according to a city's population under state law) Carras should get a handsome price for his license. (Some say a license is worth \$60,000.)

Lawyer Peter Bilakos owns a substantial interest in the Ann Street buildings except for the Red Shield Store. For years he has considered renovating them and redoing the storefront facades in a 19th century manner. Last August he joined the line for a liquor license, proposing a 4500-square-foot restaurant with apartments above street level shops. He also has discussed moving his own office there. His architectural consultants are Fry-Peters.

(Bilakos also owns the Peters Hotel, the 1840-vintage yellow stucco structure at Ann and Fourth.)

The city-county courts project can go ahead without the Bilakos property, according to County Planning Director Tom Fegan, if the post office can be acquired. The county already owns the Wedemeyer Building on Fourth, from which the Department of Social Services is soon to move out.

A group of younger architects and urban planners views the Ann-Main-Catherine-Fourth block as a pivotal block for linking the North Main/Farmers' Market area with the rest of downtown. A massive governmental structure could act as a barrier, they point out, while a more sensitively designed building could serve the same functions while retaining a sense of scale and historical continuity with the existing neighborhood if the best old buildings on the block were integrated with new construction. The group, associated with the preservation planning firm Preservation-/Urban Design, has approached the joint city-county building committee with the idea of sponsoring an open competition for architects and planners to come up with design ideas for the block.

The changing status of the post office and Bilakos property points to the swift physical upgrading of a deteriorated area at Ann and Fourth. The social impact of the improvements is mixed, however, because few black businesses control their own buildings and because rising property values inevitably displace businesses with lower incomes.



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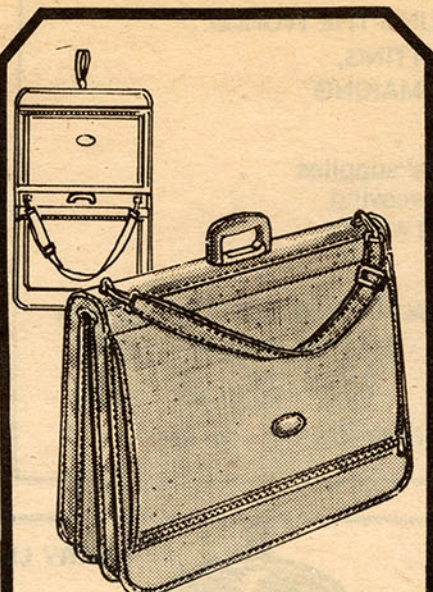
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## Downtown Changes

Abracadabra, the custom jewelry shop, is moving down the street to 205 E. Liberty, just across from the Federal Building where Colby's Custom Clothing recently went out of business to the great distress of customers who had made substantial deposits on custom-made suits and jackets. Abracadabra owner Steve Lessee expects the increased traffic at his new location to broaden his clientele, especially now that Abracadabra has discarded its earlier connections with astrology. In the red house at 302 E. Liberty where Abracadabra used to be, world-traveller Dan Keller has started Island Hopper Imports with goods purchased on his trips.

This summer's opening of the Federal Building is already affecting local businesses on the street. On July 9 the downtown station of the Post Office is scheduled to move into its Federal Building quarters. Across the street nearly half the block stands empty as Concept IV real estate developers prepare to renovate the Darling Building at Liberty and Fifth and the adjoining yellow brick Zwerdling Building into what they call "Liberty Square." Master Furriers is the last business there to leave; it will relocate in the Lamp Post Plaza on E. Stadium. Liberty Square rents are \$7.50 a square foot, \$10 including basement space.

Eden Foods has purchased the ill-starred Govinda's restaurant at 315 S. State; which will soon reopen as Turtle Island natural foods restaurant. Manager Jamie Dansicker says the restaurant's menu will appeal to a broader range of customers than Eden's Maynard Street cafeteria, which is geared toward confirmed believers in vegetarian natural foods. Turtle Island will be a place where vegetarians and non-vegetarians will enjoy eating, he asserted. It will offer home-made bread, soup, and pastries, Oriental food like vegetable tempura and tofu (soybean curd) dishes, and broiled fish, shrimp, and scallops. No meat will be served.

Govinda's, which also specialized in natural foods, closed in April six months after it opened, plagued first by an image associated with the Hare Krishna cult. Then the management introduced cafeteria service to cut costs, and most of the staff was abruptly laid off. The fired staff (largely inherited from Govinda's predecessor, the popular Indian Summer restaurant) published its grievances widely.



## Low-cost Loans Spark Renovations

The catalyst for many recent improvements on the exteriors of downtown buildings has been the Ann Arbor Tomorrow facade loan program. Former AAT director Guy Larcom engineered the program, and each of the six local lending institutions contributed \$20,000 to the fund for a total of \$120,000 to be allocated. \$75,000 has been loaned so far at a special interest rate 1/4 of 1% below the national prime lending rate, with five years to repay.

Loans so far have been made to:

- 111 W. Liberty (The Peaceable Kingdom building) for paint removal, replacement of shutters and storefront cornice.
- The New Earle (the former Earle Hotel) at

Washington and Ashley, for paint removal from the brick walls.

- To Concept IV (Bonnie DeLoof and Estelle Schneider) for alleyway landscaping behind its buildings at 111 and 113 S. Fourth Avenue. The alley, which also runs behind the Chamber of Commerce offices on Washington and various Huron Street lawyers' offices, will become a pedestrian space with benches and shrubs.
- 122 W. Washington (the Del Rio Bar building) to remove paint from brick.
- The former Eberbach house at Fourth and William (adjoining The Beer Vault) to replace the Victorian front porch.
- The converted gas station at Detroit and Kingsley owned by The Old Brick

Quality Refinishing, for painting and landscaping.

- 122 W. Liberty (the Old Town Bar) to remove paint from brick and redo the ground floor facade.
- 217 E. Washington (formerly Asian Martial Arts) for a new ground floor facade. (Central Title Service, presently at 111 S. Main, recently bought the building, which is being totally renovated and extended in the rear to provide additional rental office space. An apartment is upstairs.)

Facade loans are still available. Plans must be submitted to an Ann Arbor Tomorrow design review committee. Call AAT at 665-0621 for more information.

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# Test Of the Town

By BOB BRECK



Thom McAnn left his mark in downtown Ann Arbor, not quite outside and not quite inside either. His portrait in metal is all that distinguishes what was once a Thom McAnn shoestore.

The first two people who can correctly identify the location of this likeness win a record of their choice at the Liberty Music Shop, 417 East Liberty, which features one of the most complete stocks of classical records in the Midwest.

Mail your answer (no hand deliveries or special deliveries, please) to the Ann Arbor Observer, 502 East Huron, Ann Arbor, 48104.

Last month's Test of the Town (the diamond-patterned roof) proved to be surprisingly recognizable. Vicki Honeyman and Gertrude Platner were the winners, but over thirty entrants correctly identified it as the roof on the outbuilding behind the Forest Hills Cemetery gatehouse, on Geddes near Observatory. Doubtless the roof had become a familiar early-morning sight to people waiting there at the traffic light on their way to work.

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# The Trials and Triumphs Of Street Fair Artists

*"How can you possibly feel right selling that painting for a hundred dollars?"*

*That's a hostile art fair goer talking so loud that everyone within fifty feet can hear.*

*"My little daughter could do better . . . Mister, you're a real ripoff, y'know that? Tell me why you're not a ripoff!"*

*The beleaguered artist, having gotten up at 4 AM to drive two hundred miles, unload nearly half a ton of framed water colors from his van and set up by 10, is sitting in his director's chair with the late afternoon sun bouncing off the pavement into his face on a day that's 90° in the shade. With a parched mouth and empty stomach, he's having a hard time just keeping track of what's happening so he's not ripped off (his smaller paintings are easy to steal), and along comes this jerk calling him a ripoff when he's lucky to get \$1.50 an hour for his pains.*

**T**HAT'S an example of a bad day for a street fair artist, and that kind of day is by no means rare. Selling your own creative work, especially when it expresses personal ideas and feelings, can be tough.

"Your guts are laid out all over these tables for people to walk on," one artist said, "and indeed, sometimes, they do walk on them."

"You can become paranoid in half an hour," another artist told us. "I've had hostility toward me for all kinds of reasons. 'Why don't you get a real job?' they'll ask. A fine artist selling a painting for \$500 is really subjecting himself to ridicule. A lot of sensitive artists who are very talented can't handle art fairs."

The street fair artists are besieged on two fronts. On the one hand there are the ignorant questions from art fair goers who can't distinguish a hand-crafted one-of-a-kind item from a superficially similar object that's mass-produced and sold at K-Mart.

From the other front come the quietly disdainful sniffs of some professional artists who, secure in salaried teaching jobs, feel that sitting for four days amidst hanging planters and pictures of sailboats is beneath them, a prostitution of their artistic integrity.

Despite the disadvantages of art fairs, there are more and more committed artists and craftspeople who earn a substantial part of their living by selling their wares in this purest of

marketplaces. Fairs have become almost too successful in the view of higher-quality artists who sell in better fairs. They worry about the proliferation of fairs in shopping centers and malls, and about intense price competition from "handcrafts" produced under factory conditions.

Art fairs began twenty years ago as a semi-commercial, semi-educational movement sponsored by merchants, artists and patrons to boost business and sales and to introduce the public to practicing artists. Now it has become an industry of sorts. There are full-time professional art fair promoters. Some so-called "art fairs" seem to consist mainly of hand-tooled leather belts with commercially precast buckles and slip-cast ceramic Snoopy dogs hand-painted by the "artist."

Exhibitors at long-established, juried fairs like the Ann Arbor Street Art Fair on South University, now eighteen years old, naturally resent these carnival-type fairs that tarnish the reputations of fairs like their own. But even in Ann Arbor, where crowds are more knowledgeable and sophisticated, the reigning mood is a carnival one with bargains, music, planned and impromptu performances.

**I**F Ann Arbor's July art fairs make for a kind of theater, what goes on behind the scenes? We sought out three candid and perceptive artists and craftspeople (not necessarily representative) to tell us how they got seriously into producing for art fairs, and why they like their style of life.

Selling in art fairs is a cherished way of life to many of the exhibitors, we learned. Fairs have given many artists independence from jobs and routines they didn't like. Fairs mean they can decide where to compromise, rather than having compromises imposed upon them. Fairs enable them to know the people they sell to, rather than getting an impersonal monthly check in the mail from a shop that handles their sales for them. Fairs are a time to break out of the isolation in which an artist often works, a time to meet other artists.

Each artist we spoke with felt a rewarding sense of identification with what one artist called "a pre-industrial way of life," a time when people worked with their hands, business systems were far simpler, and distribution and sales were more direct. Selling at fairs is not often a highly profitable way to live, but it can be rewarding for certain artists and craftspeople.

## RoseAnna Worth, Enamelist

**R**OSEANNA Tandler Worth is an enamelist who exhibits in the Ann Arbor Street Art Fair on South University and in about twelve other fairs a year, in Michigan, Florida, Maryland, Louisiana, and Mississippi. Enamel is an unusual medium which less sophisticated fair goers don't understand, so RoseAnna has to choose her fairs carefully. Still she can't avoid "dumb questions" like "How do you get your clay so thin?" and "Why the hell does this cost so much?"

Powdered enamel is baked on a copper or steel base fired in a kiln at 1500°. As for the price, RoseAnna explains to skeptical customers, patiently, "First there's the price of copper, then the enamel and the background material, and the framing, and my time, and distribution costs. You know, I made this piece in my basement in Ann Arbor, Michigan, and you're looking at it in Miami, Florida. There's only one of it, it's not mass-marketed, and I had to get it down here."

Every street fair artist collects questions like these, but to RoseAnna Worth, they're only a minor irritant. Her career in crafts has been extremely satisfying to her. She was trained as an elementary school teacher, but two

years of first grade were enough for her. (Abrupt career changes are not uncommon among craftspeople.) What got her seriously into enameling was "a desire not to teach, as much as anything else, plus a desire to work for myself and have enough flexibility in my schedule to allow for the children." (Her husband Dan is a research chemist at Parke-Davis; their daughters are now 15, 11, and 7.)

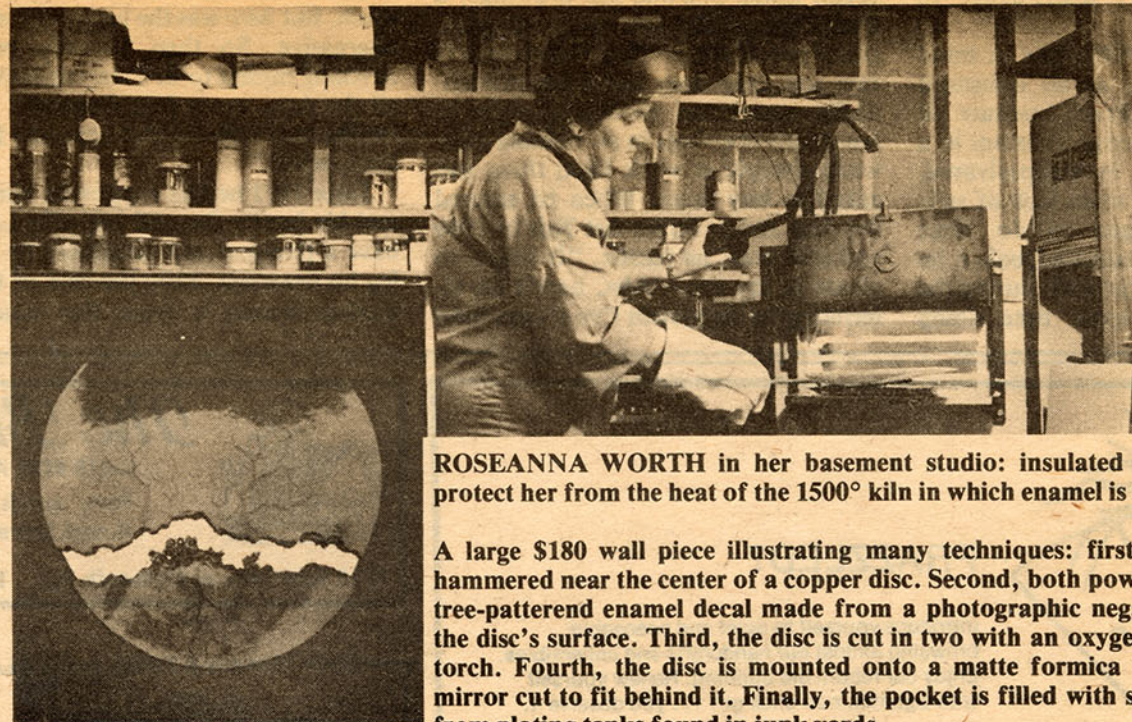
One daughter or another accompanies RoseAnna on each art fair trip. "We see a lot of interesting parts of the

country," she says, "and the children all get a chance to be alone with me." So her work brings her closer to her children; at the same time, it is an important career to her. The children get to know other artists and craftspeople and see them work. Nancy, 11, is already weaving and selling belts made on an inkle loom. This fall she'll demonstrate weaving in a fair at Natchez, Mississippi.

"I used to look down at myself as a dilettante because my husband had a full-time job and I didn't have to make

a living at my work," RoseAnna remembers. One year, however, she demonstrated at the fair, left her equipment overnight, it was stolen, and she couldn't work for two months. Unable to work, she discovered how important her work was to her. Now she sees herself as a professional, not an amateur.

Like many craftspeople who "do the circuit," RoseAnna has made good friends all over the country whom she sees only at fairs. Her living room is filled with the work of friends with



**ROSEANNA WORTH** in her basement studio: insulated gloves and a visor protect her from the heat of the 1500° kiln in which enamel is fired.

A large \$180 wall piece illustrating many techniques: first, an indentation is hammered near the center of a copper disc. Second, both powdered enamel and a tree-patterned enamel decal made from a photographic negative are fired onto the disc's surface. Third, the disc is cut in two with an oxygen acetylene welding torch. Fourth, the disc is mounted onto a matte formica background over a mirror cut to fit behind it. Finally, the pocket is filled with scrap nickel nodules from plating tanks found in junk yards.



whom she has traded pieces, and that means a lot to her, too. "I want to have as many things in my house as possible of which I can say, so-and-so made this—individual items made by individuals. I would hope my pieces would be valued the same way."

## Allan Reid, Artist

**A**LLAN Reid has sold in the fair on South University since 1969. He draws extremely detailed pen-and-ink fantasies which often incorporate animals and elements of medieval times and Nordic folklore. He's basically a quiet person, and the questions and talking at fairs goes against his grain. But the fairs are worth it because Allan loves to draw, and they mean he can make drawing his life, not simply a hobby.

"If you can handle the public, if some of your work is acceptable to some of the people, if you can handle the considerable organization it takes to do art fairs, then fairs are a wonderful alternative to the system," he says. "Doing fairs can be an alternative to teaching and doing your art at night, an alternative to selling in galleries where the owner often tries to stipulate price and subject matter and takes forty per cent or more."

"Fairs allow you to go back to what artists in the Middle Ages did. You can go out there with your work and say, 'This is what I do, this is who I am, if you like it, buy it.' You bypass the industrial revolution in a sense. It's direct. A person gets to meet you, talk to you. You shake their hand and know where your piece is going. It's a very rewarding, satisfying thing. The alternatives are very unattractive to me."

The alternatives Allan has in mind were his experiences as an industrial design student at Pratt Institute in Brooklyn and as a design assistant in a furniture company in Pennsylvania. Back then he felt an inner lack of self-expression and began to do large abstract paintings. Raised a Quaker, he was a conscientious objector during the Vietnam war. He spent time doing

alternative service at the University Hospital here in Ann Arbor.

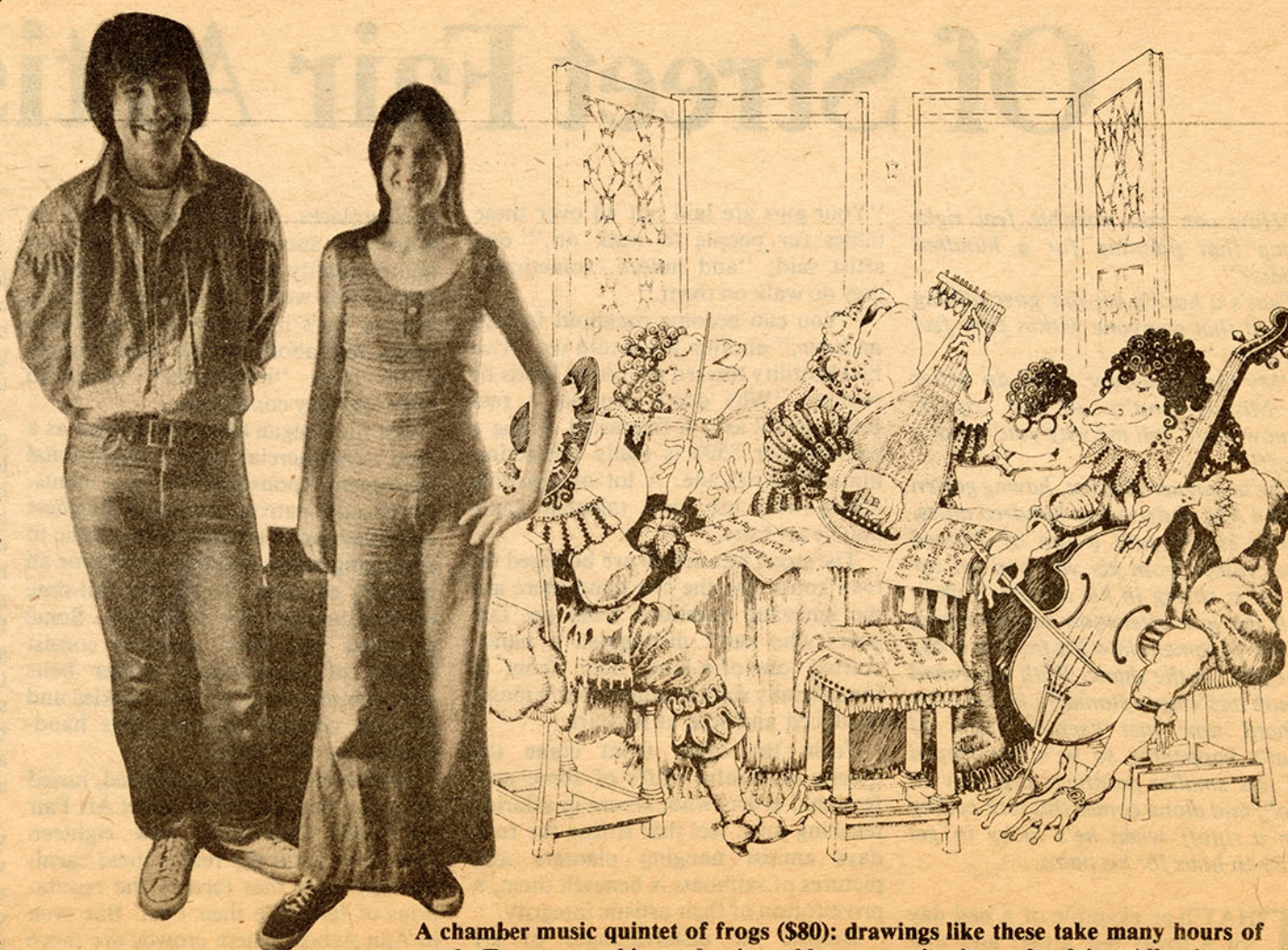
While working at the hospital, he began doing pen-and-ink drawings; a friend introduced him to the Rapidograph pen which produces an extremely fine and even line. He drew prodigiously, sometimes producing eight or ten simple drawings in an evening after work. People at work liked them and asked to buy them. When he entered the Ann Arbor Street Art Fair in 1969 and sold well, he recalls, "It began to gleam in my eye—'Aha, here's an alternative to the system I've always been

searching for.' People had told me all my life there's no way for an artist to make a living, so forget it, unless you want to be a commercial artist or teach. But *here* was the beginning of an alternative. So then I really began devoting myself to it. I started drawing all the time, every free moment I got, for the next fair. At that next one I did even better."

Since 1971 he has supported himself and his family (he and his wife Laura have a five-year-old daughter) by selling his drawings. Fifty per cent of their modest income is from five summer

fairs, a very small number for an artist who doesn't generally sell to galleries. The rest comes from commissions and sales to regular customers from his home. Customers may commission him to do a drawing on a particular subject, often as a gift for a person who wants a memento of a hobby, sport, or occupation. He's working on a large \$300 drawing of a hockey game played by an intent group of alligators, frogs, and turtles. Most of Allan's work is in the \$30 to \$100 price range.

When Allan first quit his hospital job, he and Laura tried to balance the



A chamber music quintet of frogs (\$80): drawings like these take many hours of work. To augment his production of less expensive items for fairs, Allan is now considering making limited-edition etchings, too.




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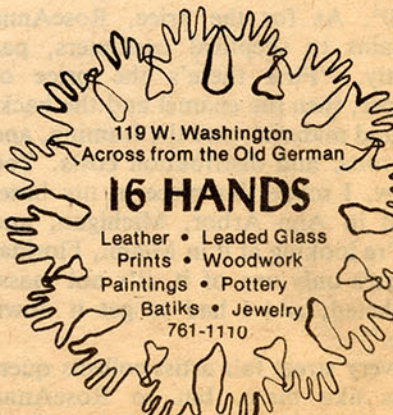
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budget by combining the artistic life with the homesteading life. They moved to the country, rented a farmhouse, and learned how to garden effectively on a large scale. But as Allan spent more and more time on his drawing, the long and tedious physical work of gardening and preserving food fell more upon Laura, who came to feel like a drudge. Their rural isolation made the situation worse. Now they live in town. Laura has time for dance classes, her own art work, and for helping Allan with the non-artistic side of his business (matting, purchasing supplies, keeping the accounts and expense receipts, arranging for fair registrations and publicity, keeping up-to-date lists of customers to whom postcards are mailed announcing Allan's coming exhibits in their area).

Selling in fairs imposes some restrictions on Allan, but he doesn't mind them. He can't always do his giant extravaganzas like woodland scenes, sporting events, or restaurant and bar interiors, which have as many rich details as a Breughel or a Bosch. "You have to produce in a certain price range," he says, "mostly twenty, thirty, and forty dollar items, with some higher priced."

Certain subject matter sells well—frogs, for instance. "In the beginning I said, 'Frogs—that's a dumb sort of a

Hallmark card thing.' Well, now I've gotten to where I can express anything I want with a frog. For example, I can use a frog for sarcasm as vicious as I want. I like frogs."

The real pressure on Allan isn't externally imposed, it's an integral part of working. To do his kind of drawing requires a special mental state. He has to have a high energy level while being totally relaxed. Then the lines flow and the ideas flow. "If I'm having a good day, the hand of God touches me. You spend all your time waiting for that, and when it comes, you wish it wouldn't go away. It's a wonderful gift, and you just use it while you have it."

"When I do a drawing like that, it has a magnetism. Some people won't have any response but others will instantly be able to tell. It has a psychic quality. I used to not want to sign my work because I felt it came from somewhere else, and I didn't have anything to do with it."

"Somewhere else" is a world of Northern European folklore inhabited by witches and all sorts of animals observed with minute accuracy and then transformed into semi-human creatures. Allan carefully researches costumes, botanical and zoological forms, and historical settings. Whether

he takes a walk in the woods or sits with a friend in a downtown bar, he thinks about what he calls the "psychic implications" of a scene: what kind of spirit would live in that tree? what would happen if the background music suddenly stopped? how would that person act if he were a certain kind of animal?

As a self-supporting artist, Allan Reid takes those speculations and fantasies seriously and develops them into art. He probably wouldn't if he had to spend eight hours a day doing layouts in a furniture company. Art fairs made it all possible for him, and he's grateful to have had the opportunity. (continued on next page)



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# Marsha Chamberlain, Potter

**M**ARSHA Chamberlain sells her stoneware pots in six or seven fairs a year, including the Summer Arts Festival on East University, sponsored by the University of Michigan Artists and Craftsmen's Guild. Her work is both decorative and functional. Its strong simple shapes, earthy colors, and random textures go well with the type of mellow-functional interiors popular today which feature butcher block, Mason jars for dry food storage, and antique pressed oak chairs.

Potters are in an especially good position to sell at fairs. For the most part they make useful objects in the \$5 to \$40 price range that attracts the casual buyer. Mugs, bowls, and pitchers are more straightforward functional objects, less vulnerable to the "is-it-worth-it" suspicions of fairgoers than abstract painting or sculpture.

Many potters can do \$1,500 worth of business during the four-day Ann Arbor fair; gross sales of \$5,000 are not too rare. Marsha sells 90 to 95 per cent of her stock at the July fair. For her it's a chance to sell big items she isn't likely to sell at any other time of year: a punch bowl with all the cups, a soup tureen with bowls to match, or a complete set of dishes.

Each year Marsha produces more pots than the last, and she is able to sell every pot she makes. To stock up for July requires a major production of pottery. First she makes a list of the items and quantities she wants to produce. She begins by throwing a simple item of a particular form—perhaps, in the cylindrical form, a pitcher using two pounds of clay. Each pitcher she throws rehearses the form; she gradually works into the rhythm of doing taller and thinner walls, to prepare for the next item, the larger three-pound pitcher. These work up to the most difficult cylindrical piece, the pasta jar, which is over a foot high and quite narrow. Bowl forms and plate forms will also be thrown to practice the rhythm of increasing in size and thinness.

Unlike classical-minded potters who strive for consistency and perfection in approaching traditional forms, Marsha makes no attempt to throw one just like another, though they may all share a general form.

Marsha came to Ann Arbor from California, where top-notch craftspeople are reputed to be more innovative than in the Midwest. But generally the fairs there are dominated by keen price competition which tends to drive down quality and encourage production-line goods from craft workshops rather than the more individualized work of independent craftspeople. The Midwest enjoys an excellent reputation among craftspeople as a market for contemporary crafts.

Marsha learned to throw pots in Berkeley but moved here shortly there-



**MARSHA CHAMBERLAIN** at a fair on a cloudy day: if it were sunny, she'd be wearing long sleeves and a hat. To withstand the rigors of twelve-hour days in an outdoor booth, she plans ahead, gets plenty of rest, takes healthy snacks like fruits and nuts, plus quantities of iced tea or lemonade.

after when her husband John accepted a teaching position in the University of Michigan political science department. She got her first chance to sell in the second (1971) Free Art Fair on East University, then open to all entrants. It had developed as an alternative to the heavily-juried Street Art Fair on South University, admission to which is highly selective. The University of Michigan Artists and Craftsmen's Guild sponsors the alternative fair, now known as the Summer Arts Festival, which is now on both East University and Main Street.

The Guild now sponsors four fairs a year in which any of its members can sell. It also offers arts and crafts classes, health insurance to self-employed artists, and other support services. Marsha, an active Guild member, likes it because students and non-students, beginners and advanced craftspeople from a variety of backgrounds can all participate. There's a long waiting list, however; applications for non-student memberships are being taken now for 1982.

Being a potter means Marsha can have a meaningful career and work at

home to be with her children, ages 7 and 3. She loves selling at fairs. She also sells through shops (in Ann Arbor they are Complete Cuisine and The Peaceable Kingdom), "but," she says, "even if I get to the point where I could sell everything I want through stores, I would still continue to do art fairs.... It's very reinforcing to talk with someone who's buying something of yours—it's a real ego thing."

It's a great time and place to be a craftsperson in Ann Arbor in 1977, Marsha thinks. "There's an appreciation of pottery and all kinds of crafts here that's really nice. A lot of my customers, when they think of a present or wedding gift, think of buying a handmade object. That's a reaction to the way a lot of people my age grew up. In my family they felt that 'if it plugs in, it's good.' We always got appliances as gifts."

## ABOUT THE COVER

The "Ann Arbor Art Fair" is from a 12" x 36" panoramic graphic by Dick Ahern. Prints will be available at Ulrich's, The Caravan, and 336½ S. State in time for the Art Fair.



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# The Remarkable Sylvester Murray

(continued from page 5)

admit I hadn't. So he explained what a city manager was—how you can have the same powers of a mayor, but you don't have to run for election. He suggested I apply to Wharton, which has a distinguished school—Fels Institute—for training city managers."

So in addition to applying to several law schools, Murray applied to the Fels Institute of Local and State Government as the director had suggested. "I got accepted everywhere I had applied with full scholarships. But Fels offered me a full scholarship plus stipend, and that's basically why I went there." With that decision, Sy Murray had chosen his career.

The program at Fels consisted of two intensive years of training. "There were twenty-five in the entering class, and one of the professors who greeted the new class told us that of the twenty-five, five would eventually drop out. 'Of the twenty who finish,' he told us, 'ten will be city managers within five years. The other ten of you will be city managers in ten years time.' And then he turned to me, 'Murray, you won't be in either group. I'm sorry, but the

country is not such now that they would let you be a city manager, but you can be an assistant somewhere. (This was before the 1964 Civil Rights Bill.) I felt real bad when I heard that. But what it did was just to buttress me—make me more determined. So I set a goal for myself: I'll give myself seven years to make city manager. Two extra years for being black." Five years after graduation (not counting two years in the Army), Murray would be city administrator of Inkster.

Murray's first position after graduation was an internship he served in Daytona Beach, Florida. During this internship he met his wife, Carolyn. "I had a dream since a young boy of marrying a woman who was a musician—a pianist. I had always had this vision of sitting back in a large living room with a big grand piano while I listened to my wife play for me. One day I was attending a reception at a small black college in Daytona Beach. They were having a senior recital concert, and sitting at the back of the hall I could see this beautiful woman on the stage. There was a spotlight on her as she played the grand piano. And I



thought, 'That's her! That's her!' " This was Carolyn, whom he would eventually marry. The Murrays today have a ten-year-old daughter and a five-year-old son.

After his internship, Murray got a job as an administrative assistant in Daytona Beach. Then, at age twenty-three, he was drafted. "Being in the Army was some of the best training for me," Murray told us. "It got me into shape physically. And being older, I was sort of a father figure to the younger draftees."

"I was an enlisted man, but from day one the Army tried to get me to be an officer. A colonel told me, 'Look, you want to be a city manager. But no one's going to give you a job as a city manager. In the Army, you can get a chance to be a manager.' " Murray didn't take the bait. Within two years he was discharged as an E5, the equivalent rank of sergeant.

"I learned something in the Army: always assume command—from day one. I observed when a new company commander would be assigned to a unit. It really impressed me that the

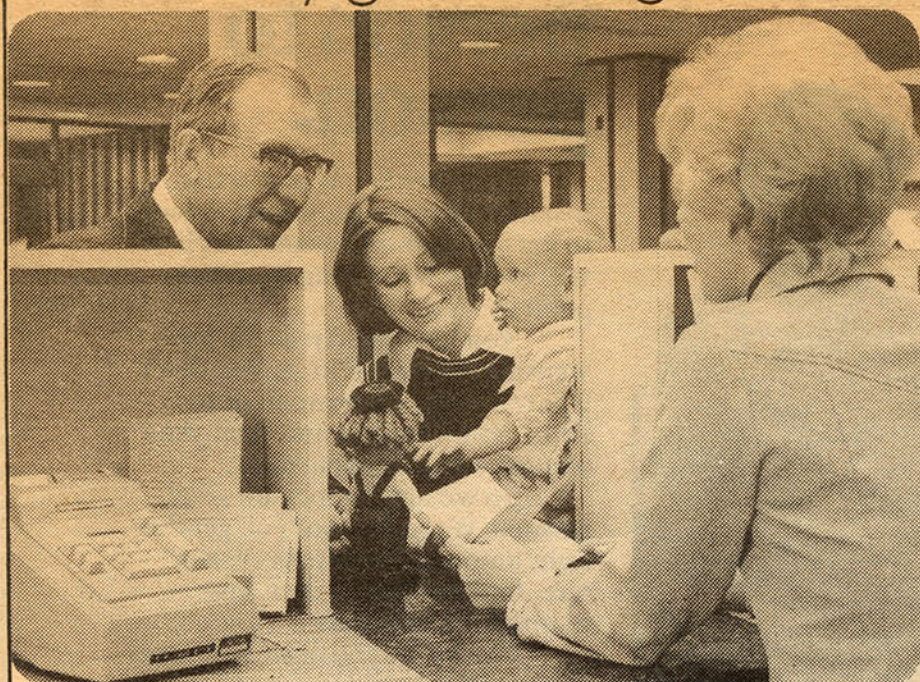
day he arrived he would write out a general order: 'I assume command,' and sign his name." From that example Murray learned to adopt the identical frame of mind on every new job he takes. The day he walks in, he is mentally set to assume command.

**A**FTER being in the Army, 25-year-old Murray went back to Daytona Beach as an assistant to the city manager. Six months later he was promoted to director of the building and planning department. After two years, he accepted the post of assistant city manager in the city of Richland, Washington.

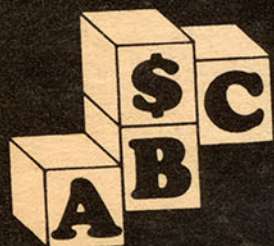
"Richland had 26,000 people, so it was a nice size to get the experience of running an entire city. There was no one on the city manager's staff except the manager and myself. I got a whole lot of experience. I was totally in charge of the administrative functions: personnel, finance, negotiations."

The Murrays' move clear across the country to the state of Washington was (continued on next page)

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also a lesson in the sometimes painful adjustments that must be made when settling in a strange new community. It was particularly difficult for Carolyn Murray. She told us, "Richland is way out on the northwest coast, and I had never been west of the Rockies before. So there was an adjustment problem for me, being so far from home. I wanted Sy to go where he thought it was best for his career. But after I got there, it was tough. Richland is a small community with a high turnover of people each year. People were always getting transferred to and from the city. You would make friends, and then maybe six or seven months later they were being transferred some place else."

Sy Murray views the matter this way: "My movements from one position to another have been based strictly on career considerations. I set goals. By certain dates, I wanted to have certain kinds of jobs. I didn't care where they were in the country. My consideration was not location, but position. My career came first, period. So I went to Richland, Washington, because that's where the position was. I regret that decision on the basis of my home life, because I almost had a divorce because of it. But I had tried to get positions closer to Florida, and I couldn't." Carolyn Murray adds that she has adjusted to this occupational hazard. "I'm a little older now, so I think I've gotten used to the hassles that go with the job."

After two years in Richland, Murray was offered the job of city manager of Inkster, Michigan, a big promotion for a person not yet thirty years of age. "Inkster, when I got there, was a town of 38,000. Going from an assistant's job in a city of 26,000 to a manager's position in a city of 38,000 caused me to have butterflies in my stomach. I had been advised by some people that perhaps it was too much of a jump. But my immediate boss in Richland told me to do it. He said the advantage of a larger city was that you have a larger staff, so you don't have to do all the work yourself. And it's an opportunity you won't get too often. You'll shave two to five years off your career pattern, he told me. So I took it, and it turned out to be a good experience."

"Inkster is a bedroom community close to Detroit. It has no industry, no super rich people. We had a forty percent black population, who were actually the wealthier residents in the city. They had moved from Detroit to find their Southfield. The whites were more typically the hourly workers at the automobile plants nearby. People there were concerned most with the day-to-day issues of city services—police, fire, streets—the nuts and bolts of city government. That's what I concentrated on, and I think I did well for them."

"I was in Inkster only three years, but I really enjoyed that job. We were doing things in Inkster. When I first came there, Inkster seemed a step-child of Wayne County. A bad bond rating, bad press, bad communications with the state and other agencies. And within three years' time, we got our bond rating changed. We got some real 'esprit de corps' among city employees. We got some good press. And we got appointments to state commissions and committees. We also paved roads, installed drains, reorganized city de-

"My movements from one position to another have been based strictly on career considerations. I set goals. By certain dates I wanted to have certain kinds of jobs. I didn't care where they were in the country."

partments and revamped the garbage collection system."

When he was asked to apply for the city administrator opening for Ann Arbor, Murray had no inkling that at his age (he was just thirty-two) he had a real shot for the position. "I applied for the Ann Arbor job solely because it was twenty miles away. As a black person, a lot of people will ask you to apply just to have a black in the mix. This was in the early seventies when it was particularly in vogue to have black applications." Even when he was told that he was in the top three final contenders, he couldn't believe they were

seriously considering him. "I thought they had already selected their person and were asking me to come for another interview to add color to the occasion, so to speak."

When he was finally told he was the city's number one choice, an incredulous Sy Murray met with Mayor Stephenson and asked, "Why me?"

Murray recalls that meeting well. "Jim Stephenson said to me, 'Ann Arbor is a different kind of community, a freakish kind of community in ways. It has a lot of different people. A large segment of our population is socially very liberal. A lot of us, however, are very conservative. Those of us

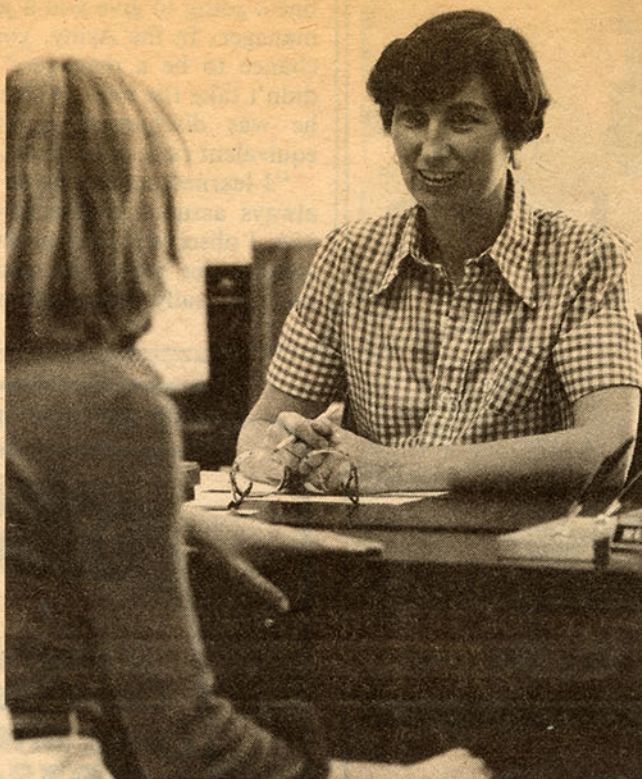
who are conservative are more conservative fiscally than socially. We could accept a lot more of the more liberal social programs if we didn't think it would break us. Your reputation is that of being a socially liberal person and a fiscal conservative, which could make your recommendations to us on council acceptable, because we could feel we're not going to go broke implementing them.'"

(End of Part One)

*In Part Two, which will appear in September's Observer, we learn how Sy Murray goes about his job. He reveals his guiding principles as city administrator and discusses how he relates to the city council, how he organizes his daily work routine, and what he finds are the most difficult parts of his job. He also talks of basic changes needed in the structure of city services.*

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# LEISURE NOTES



## The Medieval Festival

The outdoor Medieval Festival held every August in Ann Arbor is ancient music and mystery plays and jugglers and medieval costumes.

And it's also a special kind of "environmental theater" that is very popular today.

Anyone who has been to the Medieval Festival recognizes its free and easy quality right away. "Having the performances on the lawn, bringing your dog, your kid, a folding chair for your mother, getting up and walking around—that's great," in the opinion of participant Sheri Stein.

That special mixture of theater and real life was an important part of medieval drama. Mystery plays were plays about phenomena actually perceived as mysteries (typically, Biblical events) performed by members of each town's guilds of craftsmen. Performances were on wagons or crude stages in the town marketplace. All plays are short, separated by diverse intermezzi that include court and Morris dancing, juggling, a Punch-and-Judy show, jousting, and clowning.

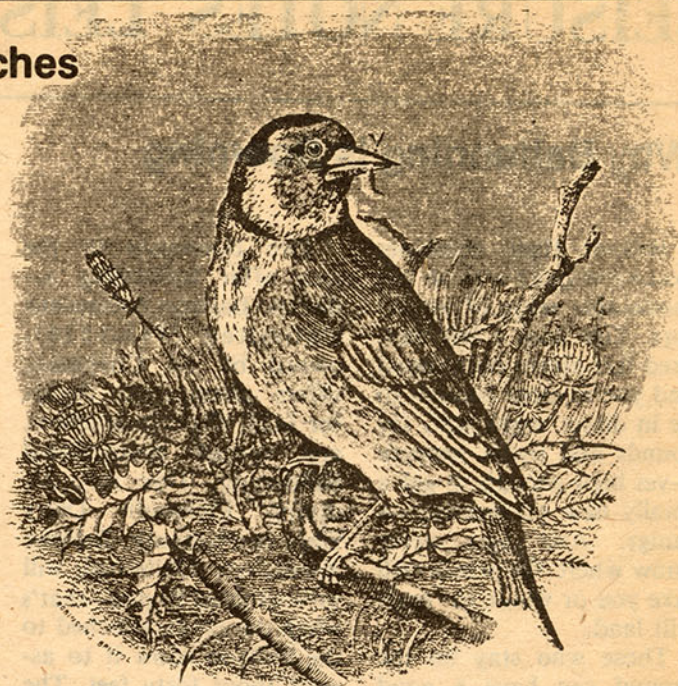
The first Medieval Festival weekend is a traveling show, in keeping with another medieval theatrical tradition, that of traveling players. On July 30 & 31 the festival will tour Ann Arbor-area parks. The following weekend, August 6 and 7, the festival is held near the pond at the North Campus School of Music. There is a small crafts fair, food stands, and a special costume procession at 1 p.m. each day for performers and anyone else who wants to don medieval garb and join the parade. All plays are performed twice a day, so don't worry about a schedule. Schedules and watches destroy the more casual medieval conception of time, anyway. Just bring a picnic lunch and come to see what's happening. There is no charge for admission.



## American Goldfinches Are Nesting Now

Ornithologist Steven Cohen files this report: American Goldfinches are nesting now. Their nests are about waist high and not too hard to find in the shrubby fields of the U-M Botanical Gardens where trees are six to ten feet tall. Unlike most birds, goldfinches are seed-eaters. They feed their young on small seeds, so their young hatch later in the summer, when seeds are becoming more prevalent.

Because the goldfinches' nests are low, you can easily watch a female incubating her eggs. You'll soon notice that she ignores the goldfinches that pass by, but looks around and calls just before her mate approaches the nest to feed her. A female goldfinch can distinguish her mate from



GOLD FINCH.

all the other males in the area by his song, for during courtship each pair develops and sings a unique rendition of their "per-

chick-o-ree' flight song. Before approaching the nest, the male announces his identity by giving that song.

## Small Presses Display Their Books

The magazine and book browsing public is invited to participate in Ann Arbor's first three-day small press fair, which will be held simultaneously with Ann Arbor's July art fairs.

The small press book fair will be open from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. Thursday through Saturday (July 21-23). It will be located in the Pendleton Arts Center, second floor of the Michigan Union at State and South University.

Small presses permit a lot of good poetry and literature to be published which the increasingly profit-oriented large publishers will not touch. Many major authors first find their way into print through small presses.

By mid-June, twenty small presses from Ohio and Michigan had already indicated interest in presenting their representative book titles, journals, and

magazines. A few of the Michigan presses which will attend are: Pilot Press and Free Books of Grand Rapids, Green's Magazine, Glass Bell, Harlo Press, The Human Press, White Angel, and Anti-Ocean from Detroit, and Anaes-

thesia Review and Salt-house from Ann Arbor.

Should any area small press editor or publisher be interested in reserving table space, contact D. Clinton, 1562 Jones Drive, Ann Arbor (313-995-0507) for information.



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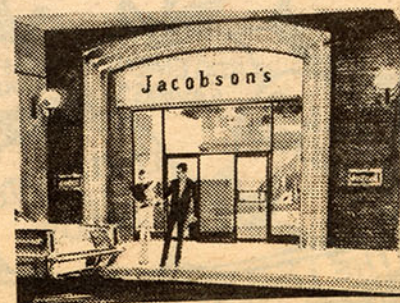


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## Why Ballooning Is Booming

Balloon flight combines peace and quiet with an unmistakable sense of adventure. You float a few hundred feet above the ground and you're close enough to be in direct touch with the sounds and sights beneath—yet high enough to get a totally new perspective on things. And you never know where the winds will take you or where the craft will land.

Those who stay on the ground can have a good time, too. A ground crew, usually four people, is necessary for launching. Watching the balloon inflate or tethering the lines, the crew is drawn into the thrilling anticipation of flight. During the flight, someone has to chase the balloon to pick it up at the end of the flight, and with an unknown destination, chasing is a sport in itself.

Two businesses in the area offer ballooning activities. Balloon Ascensions Unlimited (485-1526), owned by Ed Chapman, offers champagne flights for \$125, flight instruction, and special promotional ballooning. This July 23, during Plymouth Dairy Days in Plymouth, Balloon Ascensions Unlimited will give tethered flights—that's when the cords attached to the balloon allow it to ascend about forty feet. The cost: 2 cents a pound per passenger.

Cameron Balloon (995-0111), owned by champion balloonists Bruce and Tucker Comstock, has a complete ballooning center with rides, training, and balloon servicing. They offer regular flights (\$50 per person), champagne flights (\$125), and high altitude flights (\$150 for 2) at

over 5,000 feet.

The champagne at the journey's end is a tradition among balloonists. In ballooning's early days, pilots equipped themselves with champagne to appease landowners upon landing. (A balloon coming down in a field might spook livestock or ruin crops.)

Ballooning is big in the Ann Arbor area—relatively speaking, anyhow. There are about 18 hot air balloons and 25 pilots in the vicinity, quite a concentration considering the national total of about 1,200 pilots. Almost any clear summer evening you can see a balloon being launched from Hudson Mills Park, a popular launching site. The early morning is also a good time to watch for balloons; balloonists like the morning's cool, quiet, and more predictable winds.



## At the Farmers' Market For July and August



From ALEX NEMETH, grower:

**VEGETABLES** peaking sometime in July and plentiful through August are *tomatoes, potatoes*, all varieties of *beans* and *summer squash, cucumbers, peppers, carrots, eggplant, broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower*. Still around are *onions, radishes, greens, lettuce*. *Peas* drop off now but will be back in the fall. *Sweet corn* appears in July but is most plentiful in August.

**FRUITS** to watch for are *sweet cherries* only through early July; by mid-July *early apples, peaches, raspberries, blueberries*. At the end of July through August: *melons, plums, and blackberries*.

**CUT FLOWERS** that will be plentiful are *gladioli, azaleas, and carnations*.

## Free Summer Cooking Lessons

This summer there are additional free lunchtime mini-cooking classes offered at Complete Cuisine, 322 S. Main. Saturdays at 11, 12, and 1 o'clock there's a class on dishes featuring a selected fruit or vegetable now in season. And each day during the art fair there's a free class at 12:30, plus an espresso bar (not for free) and a special display of contemporary hand-wrought iron. Each evening

of the fair (Wednesday, Thursday and Friday from 7:30 to 9:30 a chamber music concert will be held.

Here's the schedule of mini-classes: Saturday, July 9, 11, 12, 1 *cherries*; Monday, July 11, 11:45, *Coquilles St. Jacques* (scallops in wine sauce); Saturday, July 16, 11, 12, 1 *green beans*; Wednesday, July 20, 12:30, *Vichyssoise* (potato cream soup); Thursday, July 21, 12:30, *Stir-Fried Chicken*

and *Mushrooms*; Friday, July 22, 12:30 *cheese hors d'oeuvres*; Saturday, July 23, 11, 12, 1, *corn*; Monday, July 25, 11:45, *Oeufs a la Neige* (Eggs in Snow—a meringue dessert); Saturday, July 31, 11, 12, 1, *Zucchini*.

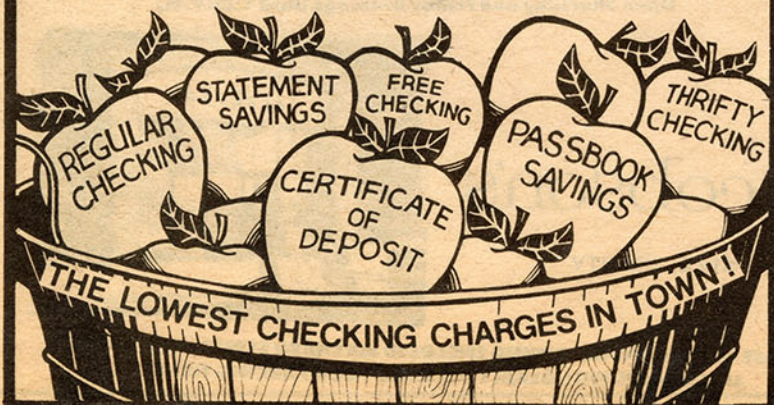
The free mini-classes, along with many other cooking lessons, workshops, and ethnic dinners, continue regularly. Pick up a schedule at the store.



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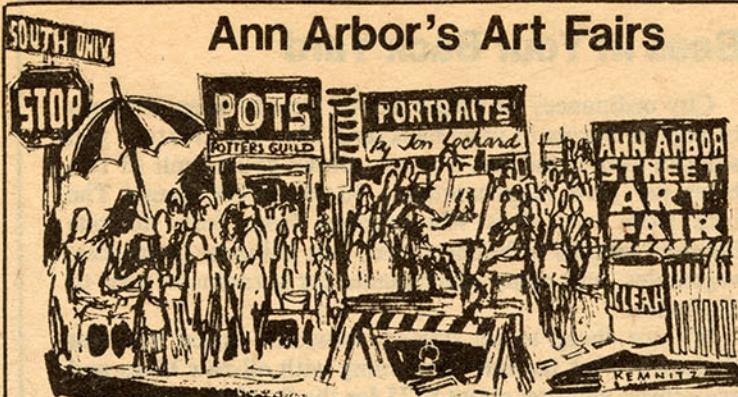


## "Roots" Returns

"Roots" is back! Not on TV, but at the Ann Arbor Public Library on consecutive Mondays starting July 18 through August 22. ABC-TV's version of Alex Haley's epic saga about his family's struggle for freedom, beginning with young Kunta Kinte's enslavement in 18th-century Gambia and ending in the post-Civil War South, is based on the story handed down through seven generations in Haley's family. He first heard it on his grandmother's big Victorian porch in Henning, Tennessee.

The Monday programs will be at 1 p.m. and 7 p.m. in the downstairs meeting room at the Main Library; two 48-minute segments will be shown back-to-back at each program. The much-discussed scenes of brutality and violence, especially in the earlier episodes, suggest the importance of parental guidance for children.

## Ann Arbor's Art Fairs



For four days each July central Ann Arbor turns into something approaching a giant Middle Eastern bazaar, with booths, bargains, music, and wall-to-wall people. It started eighteen years ago as the Ann Arbor Street Art Fair on South University. Now it's three separate art fairs around the campus and on Main Street, too, with over a thousand artists. Bargain sale tables are in front of nearly every store.

This year the art fair is from Wednesday, July 20 through Saturday, July 23. Hours are from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. except Saturday, when it closes at six.

Many fair goers don't realize the significant differences among the three fairs. The Ann Arbor Street Art Fair on South University is the oldest, and it is juried. Prospective exhibitors submit entries with color slides; only a small fraction are accepted by the fair committee. Some participants are juried out of the next year's fair to make room for fresh talent. Because it's juried, the fair has a more consistent high quality of artists. The other, non-juried fairs may have greater variety of styles and quality.

The established reputation of the Street Art Fair drew the crowds which induced other groups to sponsor and start simultaneous fairs.

The Summer Arts Festival, now on East University and on Main Street, began in 1970 when university students

and other craftspeople who weren't part of the Street Art Fair started their own free (i.e., non-juried) fair. Out of it grew the University of Michigan Artists' and Craftsmen's Guild, which runs the Summer Arts Festival. Any crafts-person can join the Guild and enter the fair. So many did that a Main Street section was begun in 1974. Now there's a five-year wait for non-students to become Guild members. New Guild rules insure that all items for sale are handcrafted.

The State Street Art Fair, organized by the State Street Merchants' Association and held on Liberty and Maynard Streets, is also not juried.

Artists and special events make the fairs more than a huge temporary shopping center for art, crafts, and clearance bargains. You can talk directly to the artists about their work, something you can't do in a gallery or store. Demonstrations illustrate the process of producing art and crafts. The South University Street Art Fair has demonstrations of nearly every art and craft medium in its show; go to the information booth at East and South University for times of demonstrations and other events.

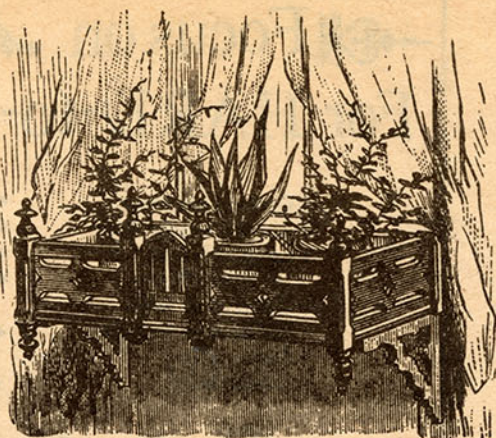
Jazz will be performed on Main Street by Eclipse Jazz each evening from 6 to 9:30 and on Saturday afternoon. At East and North University a free-form fiber environment will be woven, twisted, knotted, and crocheted by all who bring fibers and fabric strips.

Some words of advice:

- If you try to see everything, you'll overdose on sensory stimulation. Be selective, or make several visits.
- Evenings and Saturday are most crowded; mornings are cool and less jammed.
- It's insulting to bargain with artists just for the fun of it. If you're able to, pay what's asked.
- Sunstroke is quite possible if the weather is as hot as usual. The pavement, crowds, and too much standing make the heat worse. Don't push yourself. Sit down and take a rest.

## Decorate with plants!

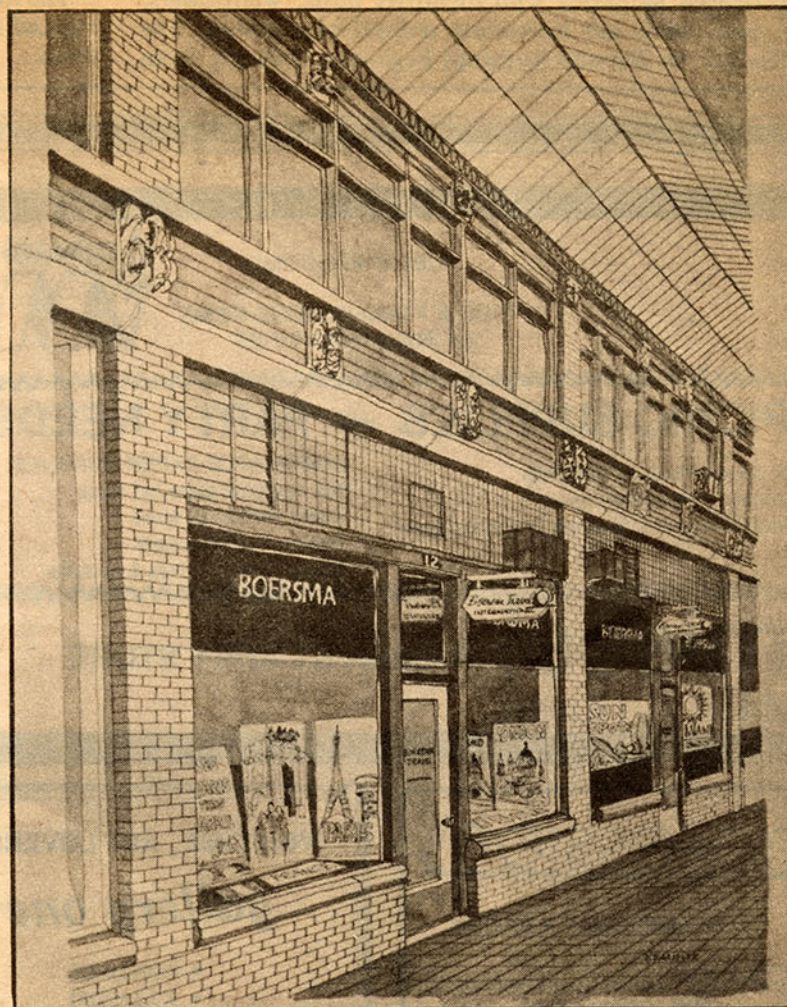
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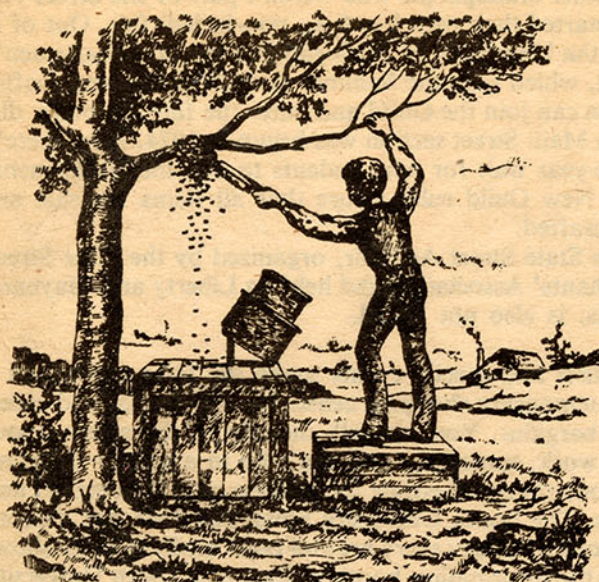
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City ordinances no longer permit you to keep chickens or pigs or horses in your backyard. But one creature you still can keep is the bee. The city allows you a limit of two hives per yard (approximately 50,000-60,000 bees). The bees from two hives will produce from forty to one hundred pounds of honey a year, and pollinate fruit trees, vegetables, and many other plants for a radius of two to five miles.

It's not cheap to get started, however, unless you can find used hives for sale. Beginning with all-new hives and accessories will cost about \$175 for the first hive plus accessories, \$125 to add a second hive. Bees are fascinating insects, able to navigate with pin-point precision over miles of terrain. But tending the hives requires weekly care and can be arduous work.

If you are interested in getting into bee-keeping, there is a local club of bee-keepers who will be happy to help you learn how to get started. Call Carol Conkey at 663-3919 for more information.

## Chamber Music Celebration

Chamber music can be a kind of classical jam session—a chance for musicians to get together and perform for the fun of it, to try out their own individual interpretations of small-scale chamber works where each instrument can be heard clearly.

The jam session spirit is behind the three-program "Ann Arbor Chamber Music Celebration" to be held in the Pendleton Room (2nd floor, Michigan Union) at 8 p.m. August 9, 11, and 15. Top-flight, first chair musicians from orchestras around the country will gather to play some rarely performed chamber works such as Villa-Lobos' "Trio for Oboe, Clarinet and Bassoon" and Stravinsky's "L'histoire du soldat."

The Chamber Music Celebration is a new idea without departmental or institutional funding; tickets (\$4 general admission, \$2.50 student for each concert) can be obtained from the Pendleton Arts Information Center, Michigan Union, Ann Arbor 48109. (Make out checks to "Ann Arbor Chamber Music Celebration.") For further information call 662-4431 between 10 and 4.

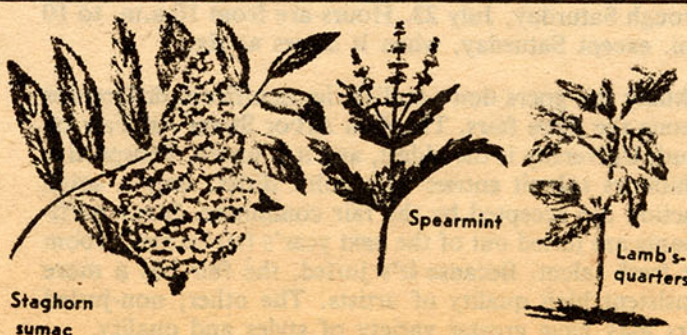
## County Offers Classes on Nature Orienting, Edible Plants

Summer nature classes are being offered by the Washtenaw County Department of Parks and Recreation. Complete course descriptions and registration forms are at the Ann Arbor Public Library, the County Building, and the Parks and Recreation Office at 2355 W. Stadium near Jackson (994-2575).

• **Orienteering** teaches how to find your way in remote wilderness terrain with maps and compasses which are included in the cost. The final field test will be in a nearby wilderness area on Saturday, August 13. Time: Mondays, July 18-August 8, 7 p.m. Cost: \$30; \$55 for two.

• **Edible Plants**, taught by Ellen Wetherbee, is about identifying and preparing native Michigan edible and medicinal plants. Time: Wednesday mornings, 10-11:30 a.m., July 13-27. Cost: \$8; \$15 for two.

• **Outdoor Appreciation** consists of walks led by an experienced naturalist who identifies birds, wildflowers, etc. and points out interesting natural phenomena. The walks are on Tuesday evenings beginning July 12, from



6:30 to 8:30 and on Saturday mornings at 10 a.m. at Park Lyndon on North Territorial Road. Park Lyndon has a bog with insect-eating plants and a marsh area rich in birds and wildlife. \$3; \$5 for two.

• **Senior Citizens Outdoor Appreciation** is a similar program (free) held at Park Washtenaw on Washtenaw at Manchester.

The first sessions of County classes on wilderness camping and survival skills took place as the *Observer* went to press.

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